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Wheat and Chaff

by

Mary Linda Bradley

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Wheat and Chaff

by

Mary Linda Bradley

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Price 50c

To the vital and serene
memory of M. H.

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CINNABAR

For M. H.'s Birthday 1937

For years in casual intercourse with words
I have had sport with them, loved them, and found
Some that were sad and final like a mound
And some that boomed and thundered like deep chords;
And merry ones, that swanked like stripling lords
And some that fester like a poisoned wound;
A few that soar like Iris from the ground
And more—piled in loose rhymes—like painted gourds.

But best, the words that from horizons far
Ring with adventure, tingling with a drive
Of thoughts that sends us out after some star.
I found this symbol of bright sound and give
To you, whose speech is upright and alive,
This valiant word—and box of cinnabar.

THOUGHTS

In Ridgefield Woods

Rich quantities of life have come to me,
    Not the sight-seeing of a gilded tour,
    But riding horses on an open moor;
Few banquets with the "great," but happily
Toasting a friend who made beauty more free
    With word or tone or brush. I have been poor
    And stung with illness, that must be a door
To pain and combat and philosophy.

This is the harvest: all the stirring brood
    Of sound a forest breeds; a startling light
Upon a leaf or flower, a flaming mood
    Of talk, and children near, to say goodnight.
    I walk amid brown leaves that take their flight,
Amid crisp-falling acorns in the wood.

PASSING STORM AT DUSK—A MONOTONE

The Storm is chanting to the house of stone
    In woods at the cliff's edge—an alto strain
    Of countless waters combing leaves with rain
While the slates chime and the low thunders drone.
Out through a gothic arch of oaks, the prone
    Gray valley sifts into the milky plane;
    The fretted leaves are wrung like hands in pain,
Two bats in jerky flight the murk condone.

There is a pattern, till the coarse gray yarn
    Of Night's thick web seals over arch and line.
The rain is stifled. How my wish would warn
    Those fragile grays to hold their place and shine!
    The lightning strikes her flint. There is no sign
Of life save from a hasty chuckling tarn.

THE LAST HEIFER

Up through New England woods rambled the drive.
The spavined gates hung wide. A grassy range
Ridged the crown of the road; its flanks were torn
By the churn of rock and water—undeterred.

So, the drive climbed the hill, on past the bowl
That once was printed with designs of flowers
—A garden, sentried by giant cedars,
Bordered in blue and scarlet, hemmed by vines,
Fertile and warm beneath the north cliff's bulk.
Now ravelled lay the texture, and the path
With cock-sure weeds, denied visitant feet.

The House stood like a sullen, dreary ghost;
But from the cottage of the care-taker
Went up a lift of Chimney smoke . . . faint life.
The youngest puppy was the oldest dog . . .
The only creature left beyond the span
Of the dead master; straining on a rope
Deaf, but grotesque with joy to see a friend,
The poor brute shook and slavered to be free.

The houses gone, the poultry gone . . . the barn
Peeled like a sunburned back, its shingles wild
As unkempt hair. And, on the basement floor,
Bedded in fallen leaves, with eyes like pools
And body soft as any fallen leaf
—Or coiled like young and sleepy springtime fern
Lay the last Heifer of the vanished herd.

This fawn-like creature seemed to be one thing
That was not hurt and old—that had not stopped.
The heifer lying there, strange, unafraid
Gave reassurance that the hapless hill

—Although it crumble for the renewed use
Of outcast generations—still would be
A bole for bearing other lives within
The pattern that we know and love and leave.

AIR POSTAGE FROM LATVIA

For B. B.

Icaros

When your green wings were slanting toward the
sun
O Icaros, you felt the noonday scald
And loose those beating plumes of emerald
And strip you of the height your courage won.
And like a driven leaf you slipped and spun
And fell, toward Crete, your helpless body mauled
By horny seas, accepting unappalled
Death's challenge that your ardor would not shun.

Now, like a guided leaf this fragile stamp
Bearing your image sails across the air
Borne by a giant plane that fears nor damp
Of storm nor blast of sun. A letter's fare!
To *us* your dream is given to use and share . . .
Our beacons blaze,—yours was the signal lamp.

DA VINCI 1452-1519

Master of mind, of armament and art,
Great Leonardo's thought went thundering wide
And far to study eagles in their glide
And gauge each sinew's stress, each pinion's part;
A puzzle,—to replace the tireless heart
That sped a surge of power and poise allied!
Those curves that cuffed the breeze, to man denied
Unless Da Vinci's cunning solved the chart!

But when he sketched his wings, the ducal word
Ordered a painting, forts—built in a rush.

And yet all flight insisted that accord
Of planes and force could, soaring let men push
Out on the wind . . . he *knew*—but took his brush
And painted the Last Supper of our Lord.

"CHARLIERE" 1783

The crowds were awed and terrified in France
When Charles threw harness on a tiny moon
Blown up with gas; they held he was a loon
Or leagued with Satan; but by some queer chance
Or skillful knowledge of dark necromance,
The earth-made thing rose like the sun at noon,—
The first "Charliere", the seed of the balloon
To carry men—with what significance!

Latvia, with fine commemorative skill,
Your stamps show forth progressive steps of flight
On minds too much accustomed now, to thrill
In thinking of those Marvels, day or night
Shuttling the mail in skies beyond our sight,
Ships that can count as crumbs each towering hill!

THE WRIGHTS 1903

There were two quiet brothers with one aim
To link a motor to a bi-planed wing
And drive this fragile vessel volleying
Upon the gales at Kitty Hawk. The name
Of "cranks" meant nothing to the Wrights. Their claim
Sprang from slow tests and reason that must bring
A man to his first governed flight—a thing,
Nay, *creed* they lived—their candles worth the game!

December seventeenth! A coin was thrown
High twixt the brothers. Orville won the toss
And on their Creature stretched his body prone,
Coatless and cold to save each ounce of dross.
The engine roared, the stubby lumbering cross
Seized on the air and *climbed*—and man had flown.

BLERIOT 1909
(Flies the English Channel)

It took some years before the unseen cage
That bounded these bird-gadgets and their wards
Opened its doors *beyond* the shaky yards
And precious minutes' hard-won heritage
Of flight. These were a sportsman's toys, the rage
Of men who risked all on the turn of cards,
More reckless kites for springtime winds, or bards
Who had new songs to sing, new words to wage.

But France had Louis Bleriot whose proud hawk
Circled from Toury safe to Artenay
And back. And Bleriot felt that none could balk
His latest aim. He started from Gris Nez
And flew his monoplane in first essay
Over the waves to England's cliffs of chalk.

PROGRESS

Prehistoric

At last I shook the hair back from my eyes
And bound the shapely flint to a tough wand.
My swift throw carried it across the pond
To take a lurking foeman by surprise.
(He became still—we say he died.)

My woman showed her teeth and gave our call.
Later, I made a picture, track on track,
—When she was moulding pots in red and black—
Chipping her features on the cavern wall.
(When we are gone—here will *she* live.)

Historic

I shall sing me a song, the song of my blade
Tempered and fashioned to sigh like silk
Fighting where blood is outspilled like milk
By the tip of this lightning a man has made.
(The knights are still, the squires have died.)

I shall take up my lute and waken the strings,
Battle and worship will warm my throat;
Hearkens my Lady . . . her praises float
Like a plume over lances, light over wings.
(My voice will fade; her fame will live.)

Present

The bombs are loaded, now the planes arise . . .
And streets are spattered deep with stone and bone,
Blood hisses on the flames. The winds must groan
To see these thousands piled in sacrifice.
(When sinks the dust—a town has died.)

Place, on the one hand, slaves cursed with the rod,
And on the other, Freedom's hours, to use
For growth, love, art or healing—here we choose
The way back to the cave? Or on with God?
(For what He is—we know means Life.)

RHYTHMIC RACKETS

Shame on us, limping Muse, for here we stroll
    Among dull factories and human flaws.
Let us forget the olden songs and troll
    Stark modern lays fit for your menopause.

Stir up a ditty on a ditch or bog,
    Distort a crumb of coke into a gem,
Strip fine machines down to a lumpish cog,
    Or sing hoarse ballads celebrating phlegm.

The brew is stew and garlic—you and whew!
    For Editors are heads and tails must fork;
While screwy blues and hunching hepcat crews
    Halloo to type. Tabu such mental torque!

But such, O Muse, fatten *anthologies,*
    These, or some wishy little washy babble
Too maudlin for a zany's obsequies.
    Gather your poets in a verbal rabble,

For how we rhymesters love to perk in print!
    Lure us with names, a fifty dollar prize
For verse that would have made poor Sappho squint;
    Though radio quotes—where is the "dope" who
        buys?

And warn us, Muse, that we must be most brief:
    Thirty-two lines, no more, in each frail packet,
So that five hundred writers own one leaf
    Of this sick book, born of a healthy "racket."

Of course we'll want to join Tom, Dick and Harry
And own our page so subtly within reach;
One "catch" we may not sing—but cannot parry:
An order for five copies three bucks each!

Old Midwife Muse, who cannot kill or cure,
Of all those servants in contempt of lip
Safe in a book as rats in a lost sewer,
I'm out to earn a clean rejection slip.

RESURGENCE

If I could live again for months of love,
If I could feel old loss with eyes grown wet,
Or climb one mountain's height with willing sweat
Rebuild a ruined home and light its stove,
Take from my Past each moment that can prove
Brave deeds of use or joy and keep them yet
Alive for repetition—what regret
Or dread would hold me from this ghostly move?

None!—but I would go on, old, insecure
Avoiding signs "da capo;"—for new power
Comes to advancing life that learns how sure
The brittle rod is of its budding flower;
While the warm Past that knew and loved an hour
Lingers, absolved, as the mind's armature.

HOLLYWOOD TRANSFERS

MORTMAIN

1

Nothing that I would offer can you take;
    The precious planning that enwraps a gift
    Falters away like tortured dreams that sift
Afar from consciousness when sleepers wake.
The last ride done, we shall not ever break
    Our bread in unknown valleys where some swift
    Brook cleaves the pasture with a silver rift
And gentians crowd around the swampy lake.

I may not give you color, nor the stress
    Of leaping winds,—nor comfort in your pain;
Nor days memorial we strove to bless
    Nor foolish little words that tug and strain.
    I may not give you anything again
Save what you wish—my bland forgetfulness.

2

The years are many and the years are lead;
    A long way I have carried them with me
    From that white garden where identity
Laid down its pride and took your love instead.
White as a stone your face—or white as bread?
    Lighter than moonlight—will it always be
    There like a cameo cut as Victory
To celebrate the striving of the dead?

The years are many and for what they stand
    To changing manhood, I shall never know.
There was our joy, possessed, revered and banned;
    There was such joy no furies can bring low.
    But God! if I could shatter at a blow
The gates of Eden and escape that land!

If I had met you when my years were young
Being most fain of song that rang so true,
And there been naught between to banish you,
How little had I curbed my thought and tongue!
I would have offered you quick laughter, sprung
From snow, rain, sun and wind—a madcap brew,
And tossed you faith and foolishness to do
With as you would,—my door wide open flung.
Would we have tramped through Autumn, with its loot
Of leaf and pattern? Built ourselves a fire
And bet on sparks racing through fields of soot?
Then stretched slack muscles that could scarcely tire,
Drinking old wine and dreaming new desire?
A Past that never was is wholly mute.

2

How much more ample this, our present, proves!
Like weathered minds that sailed the seven seas
And gathered-in their motley harmonies
From cumbrous ports and sleepy island groves,
We meet, to feel our friendship truly moves
With vast content, or counsel, or surprise
Of wit for wit, or some new boon to please;
Finding that wheat sustains far more than cloves.
But if stern Time had not put us to school
Before we met, my worship of your charm
Had proved scant fare to aid a scholar's rule
Nor had my dreams sufficed to keep you warm.
Years have compounded fire and old alarms
To Northern Lights above Ultima Thule.

TO THE RIDGEFIELD GARDEN CLUB

For its Silver Jubilee 1939

Today I drove up to the hills and saw
The West's wild lilac washing April Floods
Of blue along the canyons and the trails . . .
And knew I was in exile, till my mind
Cried "contact!" to its surging memories
And rode the wind to Ridgefield and *her* hills,
Hungry for lilac near a homestead door;
—Not this blue fragile powder from the skies,
But the cool flesh of lilac-crests, and scent
That fills the brain as Tokay fills a cup.
Lilacs beside the door that eager hands
Planted—the preface to our gardening!

How wholesome is the thought that gardeners
Searching for form in living transient hues
To play in fugues of color, should combine
The ecstasies of planning and success
With gatherings for Friendship! To compare
Textures of soil, the fashions of the rose,
The sleep of dahlias, the explosive flare
Of peonies, the somber gothic show
Of tulips, sun-changed, flaming like old glass—
For this, the Ridgefield Garden Club was born.
A quarter of a century has shown
Much joy of harvest in its busy life.

I can remember one committee's fun
Working for children's gardens—showing them
How seed must be tucked in and left to sleep
Until the time appointed when the sun
Signals it forth, still needing shelter, care
Until all that was promised stands revealed,
Ascended into color and design.

A child's amazement is a lovely thing!
So surely does a garden mean more life,
Controlled and tended and we give it chance
To be a storage-place for daily fare,
To be an outpost for experiment.
Now, to old garden-friends of home, I give
These branching lines to honor all their work,
And comradeship and the awards, well earned,
Won where the country's garden-folk compete.

And standing on the range near Western seas,
I do recall those fruitful lives we knew
Who fell on sleep to waken in His care
Who planned the pattern of their further growth.
Lift up to them our thankful memories!
And to you all—farewell and happy days.

FINLAND

March 12th-13th, 1940

I cannot rest,—I who might have no share
In saving Finland's life, can only Keep
The watch-night vigil with an aching prayer.
I would not rest while *There* so many sleep.

They sleep in freedom and know not their loss;
The truce is signed, the heat-warped guns are still.
Tomorrow Finland lifts another cross
Of Sacrifice upon a snowy hill.

We cannot see the way a man may Take
When all he loves becomes a bloody fire—
From alien bombers, until none may wake
To light a lantern, none to tend the byre.

(A blinded Finn spoke as a mind who sees
The work of Time: "A moment now,—the first!
Our folk have known as bitter tears as these;
We keep with Destiny a dogged tryst.")

But oh this night is long—how long O Lord
Before the grasping leaders cede their claim?
Keep thou "Finlandia" an eternal word
To stand for Courage, Hope and Heroes' fame.

"I FEEL WELL"

This is a psalm
This is the song of one imprisoned
Behind a sturdy lath of bone,
Plaster of flesh, that failed too soon.

But, I feel *well* today,
After a long slow sleep.
And though I know I can't do this and that
Or dance and have enough to hire the pipes
I move about in "protective arrest"
And feel no skeleton, no bars
No mouldy plaster—only myself—
The able sum of all my marvelous life—
Happy, with easy breath, untired—untired!

These I shall always keep: the grant to know
The lilt and flourish of the moving hour;
To hold a color to the light, worship its change;
To prize the lofty range of solitude.

Last night I raised my glass and drank with friends.
Good wine we drank and ate good food,
Fed us with friendly talk.

Today I bought a necklet of thin disks
Of filagree, a golden "make-believe."
It had a pleasant hissing speech
I was surprised to see its shapeliness and shadows—
The girl who sold it, liked making the sale.

Tonight in solitude I've gone back years—or just to yesterday—
And sit beside my father on a hill

That we both love and pluck a shaft of star-grass
from warm ground.
A very perfect work, my father said—and smiled.
I knew he meant the old old thought of puzzled man
Linking the force that printed both the grass and
heaven with stars
And gave us consciousness to see and smile
Content with such a galaxy of living straws.

I feel so well today—this is my song of praise
Of thanks for daily magic and perhaps
Thanks for the bars that give me subtle chance
Of serving time—or God?

REAL ESTATE

How should Safe Folk, who are not told
Of discipline to bone or breath,
Perceive a hot still day is gold
To squander—without tax to death?

For most, a day is nickel-change,
Time's pockets bulge; why plan—just go
To seek the coast or mountain range;
What of the fog that clings, or snow!

But let Life's Daring Exiles hoard
Mere silver days with patience wise.
Then toss their savings to the board
And challenge life for its supplies.

For one gold day will win a county
Of trails left by the rain (Their Maker);
Will buy for them a canyon's bounty
Whose real estate yawns in God's acre.

TO AN EX-PILOT'S MASCOT
ARIZONA PETE. (Sept. 13th, 1927—May 5th, 1941.)

Dear Arizona Pete you gently keep
Your jaunty love beside me day by day,
Though terrier-feet and quick precision-leap
Are now unheard, unseen where you may stray;

And yet I do not think that you have strayed
But, guided when your last cold sleep was spanned,
Tail up, scent keen you sought the man who made
Friends with your puppyhood—and licked his hand.

Perhaps he hailed Saint Francis asking him
To call your small son Bucky who died young.
Perhaps your bark reached Peter at the rim
Of Heaven. He'd laugh aloud as you gave tongue

To see this four-pawed fellow with *his* name
Go through the trick of "spin" and "barrel-roll."
Frank Luke and Guynemer would smile acclaim
Since Pete is gay and friendly, wise and droll.

Did Luke of Arizona pick you up
And bet that you and he could bust balloons
From France to Hades? "Hi there, little pup,
It's time to rest—those are just tethered moons."

Such foolish dreams for me to undertake!
But Pete could "do his stuff," could win a home.
And so I like to feel he did awake
To find old ties and new until I come.

I only know that all the faith and fun
That were my dog are not just dust, or lost.
Our ways divide; but all God's life is one . . .
And Pete may wonder why I am a ghost!

THE MAN FOR AMERICA
(To My Nephew, Wm. L. Rodgers)

If we keep America—and keep her we shall!
We must change a little;
Let her men realize
They must look each to himself, to neighbors
For the answer, in this trust.

We who are spent or marked by older war
We work as best me may; If there's a scar
—What of it! It's mainly *your* job now
And we don't want men with mincing pens or minds.
Let the cynics die for lack of audience!
And the workman bring courage in his dinner-pail
To foil the ambitious labor boss. *Heal up* old sores!
We have been querulous too long
For greater dole and lesser tax.

When we contend and dump out milk
To sour the ditches
That is as bad as stripping the white from the flag!
That milk could build Americans.
And he who profits by excessive gain,
Because he has the power, molests our stars.
Keep the blood red—to fight cold butchery!
Keep the blue high and clear of hate and lie
For power is not to say "you go"—"you come!"
"I am the law—or else the firing squad!"
This is true power: to be aware,

To work; to know the stuff of tears and laughter;
To serve and love; to drink the bitter cup
Like a proud toast to kings and brothers.

The man for America has sinewy hands
And a lean active soul;
He'll stand up for himself; he'll stand
As well for neighbors.
He may hail from Manhattan or Montana.
He is not squeaking "give—give!"
But booming—"What's to do
For all of us—for me, for you?"
He may look like the quiet servant Christ,
Who wept for mankind's weakness and distress;
Then prayed and—simply as one sheds a cloak—
Laid down His life to save a broken world.

DISCIPLES IN SEARCH OF A CONGRESS

I

I stand before your Congress doors and knock
O little brother grown so smart and witty;
You open,—with brows lifted, shoulders slumped.
Voices cry "peace," in patterns of self-pity.

I hear, amazed. "I'm Courage, let me in!"
("Old fashioned sprat to face the modern din!")

II

"With me, my sisters Courtesy and Awe,
Upright and brave with tribute's eager zeal."
You gaped at us and drawled: "Sisters, go home
Back to your samplers and your spinning-wheel."

(Courage and Courtesy and Awe! What schisms
To mix with dues, free love and power "isms!")

III

Then straightway two tall lads breasted the door,—
    Training and Discipline. "Christ!—you and who?"
"We come to meet with Youth." "Not here, you don't!
    Send us young Glib and Rant and Ballyhoo.

What could you dopes find here, but time mis-spent?
Back to your myths! I booed the President."

IV

O little brothers we are poor in pocket
    But rich in things of which you have small ken;
We may not enter. Then come *out* and salvage
    Under the sun, progress or change like men.

And if it's peace you seek and foreign heroes
Choose One who *gives*—not takes—follow His cross.

"I AM AT WAR"

October, 1941

Thus saith a citizen,
Quite unimportant and with outworn hands
(I must, for my share of America and honor's sake
Strike up a match and touch the thought to paper.)

I am at war—not niggardly at war,
At grips with tricky speech and scheme,
Weakness and arrogance
And "cracking wise" when death has touched our seas.

But more! I am at war with all the selfishness
That leads some of our brassy throats
And ice-box voices to exalt the gain
Of isolationism versus "hysteria."

The world has shrunk; it is the outland pasture
Of neighbors—yours and mine—within the sound
Of all our talk and laughter, groans and prayers.
And must we feel that death and wounds and work
Across the way, are no concern of ours?

Who are you that you should choose
The plunder of taxation or of trade?
Who are you to pad with cotton wool
Against each scratch? Yes, who are you,
Foul barterers—even of holy work—who must
Delay scant help (who use this need and horror
As dishonored tools) to force each laborer to pay
Tribute before he wins his job?
And who are you to see the Dead,
The plodding, hopeless, helpless Lives
Across the way, and save your tawdry skin?

Dear God, I often choke on shame—
For lack of forthright leadership; for fallen women
Who cannot spare their men for manhood;
For my own lack of strength.

I am at war—with Hitler and his kind.
If I should feel no urge to call on force
Against this loathesome inmate of a faithless camp,
My spirit would go scabby with its sores
And cry itself "Unclean!"
Are you and I too "proud" to die
For Rubble grown more famous than the Taj?

For homes of kindred folk? for future life
And brotherhood made better step by step?

If such a fight be wrong—then welcome sin!
Let us make open war,
To save our freedom and to set men free.

POINT BLANK RANGE

Come, let us reason in this mighty storm!
Knowing the way, the truth, the light beyond
These shrouds of snow these dark and shifty winds.
Let us go forward, given to estimate
Aright, those tricks of thought that fester now.
So it is time to make a healing vow,
To put off clumsy sins of speech.
We brag.
We boast in newspaper and radio:
"We are the greatest, have the most, can make
The hugest effort for the war and peace."
How generously we should think of peace,
Founded upon that fired, patient brick—
The long endurance of those elder lands!
Let us speak softly and condemn this boasting,
Aye, let us "hold our peace" and turn to war
While turbines hum and knotty, able hands
Fold pads, roll bandages.

Are we so weak
We have to flog ourselves with hate before
We act or fight? There is a cold resolve
That finishes the job—bungled by hate.
Let us be angered, let us be aroused
To take what part we should, without the bleat
Of mouthy brag and unproductive hate.

We have so many deeds to lead us on:
Dunkirk and Crete, the terrible wide span
Of tortured lands, where poor and lonely folk
Lay down defensive lives,—until each stone
Must be an altar to the unknown man.
We have Wake Island, where the startled reef
Is marked with such a glory in defeat
It cries "Awake and work! Hold to your faith
With word and deed!"

Like a Marine,
Say it with action and at point-blank range!
(Let Nazi hate heil Hitler to his hell.)
Why should Pearl Harbor be "remembered"? when
We know we have to win the war, or die
Like stunted calves?

I would remember this:
Beethoven's soaring dreams and Wagner's will
To turn the compost of his ailing life
To seas of music and to skies of sound.
And Nippon's gardens. Who can take away
My legacy from Michael Angelo?

And so remembering, learn how to face
Lean years to a wise triumph for mankind.
For Victory still strides from Samothrace;
It is to be completed in each heart
And won by heroes in the village street,
The men of Wake and of Corregidor
And by the man remembering a Star.

ENGLAND 1940

There is one Island since the world began
That fought her way to Empire and released
Whole continents to nationhood, increased
And kept them free as only England can.

What if this sour-souled curst barbarian
Powder the world with bombs, think to have greased
The wheels of progress when all progress ceased!
The starveling pawn waits to become a man.

And England fights for him and what he lost
England that built and learned and built anew
Better each time and kinder and more true
Counting both toil and laughter with their cost.

Gather your hearts and means unto her aid
Who walks with life or death free, unafraid.

II
Battle of England

I say that England suffers unafraid,
Rather, she takes the terror of the bomb
And splices dread with humor. Neath the hum
Of planes from upper hell, her sons bring aid
Each to a neighbor crushed beneath the raid;
Such deeds from strangers as from brothers come;
To clear the roof above a living tomb
Good thieves from tiring saints catch up the spade!

This is a people that was sleepy, old
As Holly in New Forest, but her seed
Can bleed like holly under autumn's Knife,
Her fighting leaves still green through wintry cold.
When England really calls there is no deed
—From youth or age—withheld for England's life.

III

September 16th, 1940

Stronger than eagles in the strength of morn
Men crowd the skies, unlike that lonely bird.
These stormy ones, whose wings the mists have blurred
Are driven leaves of Thistle, Oak or Thorn
Sweeping the hate of Nazis, crushed and torn
Back to the ports of France whence they had erred
"To wipe out England—" was their boastful word!
But new armadas meet an olden scorn.

The barges thickened from Dunkirk to Brest
Loaded with arms, heavy with modern Huns—
Pawns in a game of making Slaves at will!
But like a gale the British bombers pressed
Diving with doom against the raving guns—
And George, tonight, is King in England still.

IV

City of Benares

Sept. 17th, 1940

The war goes on like Time in deadly mood
Imprinting pain and sorrow, as the mark
Of Cain on earth or sea, in day and dark.
The City of Benares with her brood
Of children sailed to seek a land of good
Where wings display the song of meadow lark
And not the small-pox of the bomb. The bark
Was sunk six hundred miles from land and food.

Britannia rules the waves! Indeed she must
—When children hush their cries and Sing to Death
Defiant carols, while the shattered toll

From ship and life-boat grows, with failing crust.
They flung that song like flags with their last breath
"Roll out the barrel"—down the ages roll!

V

"Faites vos Jeux"

Why ask who are the heroes? Set your hand
Upon a workman's arm; no one more brave
Than the bent figure praying in the nave
Before a broken altar. Understand
That England's people have her ramparts manned;
King George, his stalwarts, *all* have joined to save
The worth of life, though each untimely grave
Make many a refugee in his own land.

Last spring I heard a Minister proclaim
That Paris would be fought for street by street.
And Liege was urged: "Stand fast!" in Kingly tone.
Paris is whole; Liege died unknowing shame.
But English hearts give odds against defeat
And stake old London's glory stone by stone.

VI

And after all the pulsing words are said
Of Kings and heroes, glory and true gain
Let us knit up the ravelled speech of Pain.
Where have his handclasp and his passion fled?
Where does he really sleep and couch his head?
What hills can share his laughter? What explain
His presence, unseen here, in sun or rain?
Why still *expect* him from among the dead?

A word sweet-spoken and a coat outworn,
A song, a match struck for his shabby pipe

His homeward step on leave with flying done;
His strength and peace,—and that map-pocket torn!
His glee to find the damsons blue and ripe—
These I can keep though England take her son.

THE HALF LOAF

For B. H.

It did not seem that I should ever be
With the winds free,
    Or that these sandalled feet in sand would sink
    Where the streams shrink
To threads in the broad wash, spring-given to flood.
Eternal good,—
    To win the freehold of a common day!

To thrust my toes amid the tugging sand
In a walk banned
    Of late, and feel the hot and sifting grains
    Blot out old stains!
Surely I will be whole. The wind's clean pace
Has dried my face.
    The sun pours through my mouth to finger tips.

Give me my saddle and a horse! The trail
Can know my hail
    Again! Again I hear the easy beat
    of horses' feet,
Absorb the sounds of leather and of spur
And the light stir
    Of shifted brush beside the coiling slope.

Then to the orchard, reaching for the hot
Sweet apricot,
    Sucking the pulp and riding slowly on . . .
    With time to con
New Progress, now afoot or now a' horse
Through the rich course
    Of earth unblemished and this molten sun.

Break me the half loaf, let me taste the wine,
I'll not repine.
    A lovely house is but a halting-place
    Till I can trace
Some wall of mountains and a rock's steep dome;
They form the home
    My every sense accepts beneath the sky.

I will make use of them a little while,
And though I smile
    Derision at my need of roof and brick
    To turn the trick
Of living, I, grown soft with feeble years
Can have no tears.
    My Hope walks on the sand. My soul rides hard.

HYMN FOR UNITED NATIONS' AIRMEN

(May be sung to tune of "Rejoice ye pure in heart")

Lift up their wings O Lord
Who ride the upland sky
And guard their passage with thy Word
Who fight for liberty.
Their skill, their faith
Is given unto death.

Lift up their hearts to war
Since they are men of peace,
And guide them by a pilot's star
Doomed Nations to release.
And in the sun
Behold thy victory won.

But if their wings must fail
Make all Space fair and plain;
For they have found their holy grail
Of sacrifice in pain.
Dear Lord, we pray
Just take them home that day.

SONNET

January 30th, 1942

Now are we bathed in moonlight—you, in sleep!
The eucalyptus stand like pillared snow
With rich Ionic darkness on each brow;
And you perhaps are pausing, just to keep
Your faithful love near us who must not weep.
We knew you suffered and we let you go
Loosing our several ties. The radio
Plays your "Vienna Woods."—Is the road steep?

It should not be too hard for your brave tread
Lightened by kindness left us without end.
You *should* have Strauss and moonlight, for such bread
Of gallant memories! We keep and lend
The joyful daily things both done and said,—
While even clumsy Death beholds a friend.

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